

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 /079 W

-----024015 200123Z /70

R 172050Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7414

INFO USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 0830

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, FJ

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER EYES UN POST

1. THERE IS SPECULATION IN SUVA THAT THE PRIME MINISTER RATU SIR KAMISESE K.T. MARA HAS AN EYE ON THE POSITION OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND IS SEEKING WAYS TO GROOM HIMSELF FOR HIS EVENTUAL CANDIDACY FOR THAT POST. IN SUPPORT OF THIS SPECULATION IS CITED THE FACT THAT THE PM IS SHOWING AN EVER INCREASING INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESERVING FOR HIMSELF THE HANDLING OF MATTERS WHICH PROVIDE HIM WITH MAXIMUM EXPOSURE TO INTERNATIONAL FORA LIKELY TO PRODUCE GAINS IN PERSONAL PRESTIGE AND ACCEPTABILITY BOTH BY LDCS AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE LEADING ROLE HE IS DETERMINED TO PLAY IN THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN ACP AND EEC EVEN ON SUCH TECHNICAL MATTERS AS PRICE OF SUGAR.

2. THE PM IS DESCRIBED AS HAVING SET HIS SIGHTS FOR THE SUCCESSION OF DR. WALDHEIM EVEN IF THIS IS NOT DUE UNTIL 1982 TO THE EXTENT THAT HE IS PREPARED TO ABSORB CRITICISM FOR THE PRIORITY HIS IS GIVING TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS THUS LIMITING TIME AVAILABLE, INCLUDING PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN FIJI, FOR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

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3. ANOTHER EXPLANATION FOR THE PM'S AMBITION IS AN ALLEGED FRUSTRATION WITH THE NARROW CONFINES OF THE ISLANDS OF FIJI WHERE HE HAS COME TO BELIEVE THAT THE CHALLENGES ARE NOT COMMENSURATE WITH HIS TALENTS AND VISION. THIS IS NOT TO SAY HOWEVER THAT FIJIAN PRIDE IS NOT A FACTOR IN HIS MOTIVATION. WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO FEEL STRONGLY THAT

A SUCCESS IN HIS AIM AT THE UN WOULD REFLECT CREDIT ON FIJI AND WOULD ENHANCE FIJI'S IMAGE IN THE WORLD. IN FACT, IT WOULD PUT FIJI ON THE MAP. EVEN THE LATEST MOVE TO OFFER FIJIAN TROOPS TO THE UN PEACE FORCE IN LEBANON IS SEEN BY SOME AS HAVING BEEN INSPIRED TO SOME EXTENT BY THAT MUCH COVETED POSITION IN THE MANHATTAN GLASS TOWER.

4. ALL THIS HAS A RING OF PLAUSIBILITY TO US AND IS CONSISTENT WITH THE MAN'S REPUTATION AS A CHIEFTAN WITH STRONG AMBITION, PRIDE AND APPARENTLY VISION. THE ONLY DIFFICULTY IS THAT THE SAME QUALITIES WHICH WOULD SEEM TO LEND CREDIBILITY TO THIS SPECULATION MAKE HIM ALMOST INDISPENSIBLE FOR THE STABILITY AND PROGRESS OF FIJI. HE IS PERHAPS THE ONLY MAN IN THE COUNTRY WHO COMMANDS SUCH PERSONAL RESPECT THROUGHOUT THE POPULATION INCLUDING THE INDIANS AS TO KEEP RACIAL TENSIONS UNDER CONTROL AND EVEN TO CHANNEL THEM TOWARDS PRODUCTIVE COMPETITION. HE CERTAINLY IS AWARE OF THAT CRITICAL ROLE IN WHICH HE IS CAST INTERNALLY.

5. IF THE SPECULATION ABOVE HAS ANY BASIS IN FACT WE BELIEVE THAT RATU MARA WILL HAVE DIFFICULT DECISION TO MAKE IF HE IS CALLED UP ONE DAY TO CHOOSE BETWEEN HIS PERSONAL AMBITIONS AND HIS IMMEDIATE RESPONSIBILITIES IN FIJI ESPECIALLY IF IT APPEARED THAT HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE UN POST IS NOT WITHOUT SOME CHANCE OF SUCCESS.
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6. REGARDLESS OF DEGREE OF ITS PLAUSIBILITY AND THE FACT THAT 1982 IS STILL A LONG WAY OFF WE THOUGHT WORTH REPORTING SUBJECT SPECULATION AS ANOTHER INSIGHT INTO RATU MARA'S PERSONALITY AND AMBITIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECRETARY GENERAL, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SUVA00830
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780212-0330
Format: TEL
From: SUVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780547/aaaabodb.tel
Line Count: 100
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 11ddb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2658892
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER EYES UN POST
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, FJ, UN, (MARA, KAMISESE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/11ddb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014